

“Bah HumDoc”: A Cornish Christmas Carol

“Tis the season to be grumpy!” This Doc Martin Christmas story based on “A Christmas Carol” tells the time when Doc Martin discovered the true meaning of Christmas (Recommended Prequel: “Doc Martin: Brotherly Love”).

Roger Fenn begins narrating the story by saying, “Twas the night before Christmas, and all through Portwenn, every villager was stirring, almost going ‘Bodmin’.

The stockings were hung...”

At that moment, Nathan walks up and interrupts Roger by saying, (Clears throat) “Excuse me, Roger.”

Roger Fenn responds, “Yeah, mate.”

Nathan continues, “I’ll go ahead and take over the story from here so you can get back to Christmas caroling. Don’t forget that you and the church choir need to be at the school this evening for the Christmas program.”

Roger Fenn replies, “Don’t worry, mate. I wouldn’t miss it for Santa Claus himself. We’ll be there and ready to ring in some Christmas cheer. See you at the Christmas program!”

Nathan takes over narrating the story, “Hello! I’m Dr. Nathan Parker, Doc Martin’s long-lost brother from Manchester. I have a Ph D, and I took over as the school headmaster for Louisa during the story ‘Doc Martin: Brotherly Love’.

The majority of ‘Doc Martin’ stories are presented during the summer months when Portwenn is experiencing beautiful sunny weather and the village is experiencing its share of non-stop adventure.

But for anyone who loves the adventures of ‘Doc Martin’, you’ve probably wondered what happens in Portwenn between the summer stories, especially how the villagers in Portwenn celebrate Christmas.

So I’ve decided to take on the part of ‘Charles Dickens’ and tell the story of my first Christmas celebration in Portwenn, which does share some similarities to Dickens’ classic ‘A Christmas Carol’, although this is more of ‘A Cornish Christmas Carol’.

So let’s begin...”

It was a cold, dreary, and damp Christmas Eve in Portwenn. A major storm was on its way, but alas, there wasn’t a flake of snow in sight to offer the Christmas present of a white Christmas to the village of Portwenn. The villagers were scurrying and bustling about the village wrapping up their preparations (some literally) for Christmas Day.

Roger Fenn made his return to Portwenn during the fall after I first arrived in Portwenn. He became actively involved in the music programs at both the school and at church, directing the church choir on weekends and teaching music lessons for the children at school throughout the week. It was an experience to finally meet Roger after his being away from Portwenn for such a lengthy time, and he was surprised to learn the new school headmaster was Doc Martin's brother, although his surprise quickly wore off when he began working with me at the school.

An annual tradition Roger held every Christmas while he was in Portwenn and resumed upon his return was leading a group of Christmas carolers from the church choir, caroling and singing and spreading Christmas cheer around the village. This Christmas Eve was no different, with Roger leading a group of Christmas carolers down the streets of Portwenn singing "Here We Come A Caroling":

*Here we come a-caroling
Among the leaves so green,
Here we come a wand'ring,
So fair to be seen.*

*Love and joy come to you,
And to you glad Christmas too
And God bless you and send you a happy new year,
And God send you a happy new year.*

Everyone in the village was in the Christmas spirit. Even Ruth. Even me, who is usually as grumpy as my brother. There is not a soul in Portwenn who could not be in the Christmas spirit this year.

Except for one person...Doc Martin.

Yes, while the villagers of Portwenn were all in the Christmas spirit, Portwenn was not exempt from its own "Scrooge". Doc Martin grumpily makes his passage up the streets of Portwenn toward his cottage and surgery, all the while Roger Fenn and his merry group of carolers singing "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" as the mood sombers, with Doc Martin giving everyone a grumpy glare as he makes his way up the cold, damp, dreary path.

*God rest ye merry, gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay
Remember, Christ, our Saviour
Was born on Christmas day
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy*

Doc Martin enters his cottage, slamming the door shut.

Louisa cheerfully welcomes Doc Martin by saying, “Hi Martin!”

Doc Martin responds in a grumpy monotone “Hello.”

Louisa continues, “I’ve decided to volunteer to assist Nathan at the school for its annual Christmas program. This is Nathan’s first Christmas program in Portwenn, and I want it to be special for him and offer him some guidance on how to manage the program...if he’ll listen to it.”

Doc Martin bluntly responds with, “Fine. Sure. Yes.”

Louisa begins changing her cheerful tone to a more serious tone, replying, “You are coming to the Christmas program tonight, aren’t you? You do want to come and watch your son (James Henry) perform his part in the program as the Baby Jesus.”

Doc Martin interjects with, “Performing? He’ll just be sleeping in a manger!”

Louisa, voice escalating with anger, responds, “That is the whole point of the story! He is supposed to be the Baby Jesus sleeping in the manger! Don’t you understand the Christmas story?”

Doc Martin exclaims, “I have patients to attend to today as any other day! I don’t have time for all this ‘Christmas nonsense’!”

Louisa, now furious, responds with, “Not even to watch your son perform in the Christmas program?”

Doc Martin, angrily snaps back, “What performance?”

Louisa replies, “OK then, if you want to be a ‘Scrooge’ then, be that way, but it’s Christmas Eve, and I’m going down to the school to assist Nathan with the Christmas program, then I’m attending the program later to watch our son’s Christmas performance, and if you want to be a ‘Bah HumDoc’, go ahead!”

Louisa storms into the other room and glances over at James Henry while softly saying to him, “Your dad is being a ‘Bah HumDoc’ this Christmas...yes he is”. Doc Martin just glares at both and steams down the hall, slamming his head into the door post as usual.

Before Louisa leaves for the school with James Henry to assist me in the Christmas program, she begins preparing a Christmas dinner consisting of a feast of Christmas treats including: turkey stuffed with a cranberry and rice dressing; a minced pie, while a delight in Portwenn, she knows I will wince at the thought of eating mincemeat; a chocolate pie, a cherry pie, chocolate truffles rolled in cocoa, and a green bean casserole. Indeed, her homemaking skills have improved dramatically since I first arrived into Portwenn (although Doc Martin is still thankful that people in the UK do not celebrate Thanksgiving as he was not up to two major holiday meal attempts by Louisa), and it seems she is on track for a festive feast of a Christmas dinner.

Doc Martin storms into the kitchen while Louisa is finishing up her Christmas dinner with a grumpy, “Why go through the trouble of a ‘Christmas dinner’?”

Louisa angrily responds, “Because it’s Christmas, Martin, and I want our family to have a festive Christmas dinner we can all remember!”

Doc Martin forcefully interjects, “Like the other meals you prepared when you began staying home.”

Louisa, defending herself, replies, “Martin! You know my homemaking skills have improved, and you know I am trying to prepare a decent Christmas dinner and assist in the Christmas program and prepare for us all to have a wonderful Christmas celebration together! Now I am wrapping up this dinner preparation, then I’m off to the school, and I hope I will see you there tonight for James Henry’s performance!”

Doc Martin coldly and bluntly responds, “Performance. Indeed. Bah HumDoc.”

Louisa then slides the turkey in the oven and begins washing up and preparing to leave with James Henry, in hopes the turkey will be finished and oven roasted to perfection by the time the Christmas program is over.

Louisa arrives at the school to volunteer to assist me in the school’s annual Christmas program. Two other villagers assisting in the preparation of the Christmas program are Carl and Lucille Chote. The Chotes open their home every year to display their annual “Christmas Museum” to the villagers of Portwenn, containing the largest collection of Nativity scenes, Christmas trees, and Christmas decorations. Their daughter, Carla, a student at the school, has a major solo singing role in the Christmas program this year, and the Chotes are beaming with Christmas spirit waiting for the evening when they can hear their daughter sing.

About that time, I enter the school auditorium, wearing a Santa hat and flashing a pair of Christmas braces underneath my suit jacket, all the while bellowing out “Merry Christmas! Hi Louisa! Hi Mr. and Mrs. Chote!”

Louisa responds with, “Hi Nathan!”, and Mr. and Mrs. Chote respond with, “Hello Dr. Parker!”

I make my way to the platform and kick off our preparations with a little speech at how flawless I intend for our Christmas program to turn out, “Now then. As I am sure you are all aware, I have the proficiency to direct this Christmas program and ensure it comes out flawless. In addition to my Ph D, I was a national NFSM member through high school, in which I earned this Paderewski gold medal I am wearing on my suit jacket. My goal, as your director, is to ensure this Christmas program is the finest Christmas production in all of Cornwall. If we all work together, we can show all of Cornwall that there isn’t a better Christmas program anywhere but the one performed by the students of this school in Portwenn. Is that understood?”

Everyone responds with, “Understood.”

Louisa takes me side and gently coaches me saying, “Excuse me, Nathan. Since I have directed many of the prior Christmas programs for our school, allow me to make a few suggestions to you...”

I interrupt with, “Not now, Louisa. I hear Christmas singing outside the school.”

We all run outside the school to be greeted by Roger Fenn and the Christmas carolers singing “Joy to the World”, in which we join in singing with them while standing outside the school for a brief moment to get a breath of fresh air.

*Joy to the world, the Lord has come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.*

*He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.*

We all head back into the school to resume preparation for the Christmas program and wave goodbye to Roger and the carolers as they make their journey toward Large Restaurant.

Meanwhile, speaking of Large Restaurant, Bert has come up with an ingenious plan to sell Christmas trees on the property of Large Restaurant. It seems if Bert has found his second calling, as he sells a great number of Christmas trees to Portwenn villagers, including one to the school to use in the annual Christmas program. Bert begins to leave the restaurant to head toward the school to assist in the Christmas program.

As Bert leaves, he exclaims to Al, “Isn’t this tree a beauty, my boy? It will look lovely all decorated for the school’s annual Christmas program. Well, I’d better be off! You can manage things here, right, my boy?”

Al cautiously responds, “Dad. Please tell me you didn’t volunteer to assist in the construction of the school’s Christmas program scenery?”

Bert interjects, “Of course I did, son! You think that lofty headmaster Parker is capable of constructing Christmas program scenery? He wouldn’t get his fancy fingers dirty long enough to even put up the Christmas tree! And Louisa, well, she’s a bit more industrious, but she shouldn’t be setting everything up alone. I’m going down there to ensure the Christmas program’s scenery is handled by a ‘professional’.”

Al responds, “That’s what I’m afraid of, dad. Want me to go with you?”

Bert casually replies, “Nonsense, boy. I need you here manning the Christmas tree lot. We’re making a killing off of Christmas tree sales. We should do this every year!”

Al nervously asks, “Dad, you never told me where exactly we got all these Christmas trees.”

Bert interrupts, “Don’t worry about it, son. We’re making a fortune off these trees.”

About that time, Roger Fenn and his merry band of Christmas carolers drop by Large Restaurant, peer out over the field of Christmas trees lining Bert’s Christmas tree lot, and begin singing “O Christmas Tree”, with Bert and Al joining in.

*O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree
How lovely are thy branches!
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree
How lovely are thy branches!*

*Your boughs so green in summertime,
Stay bravely green in wintertime.
O tannenbaum, O Christmas Tree
How lovely are thy branches!*

As Bert and Al wave goodbye to Roger Fenn and the carolers, Bert grabs a second tree and proclaims to Al, “I think I’m going to go cheer up the old Doc on the way to the school. I’ll deliver him a Christmas tree too as a gift from the Large family”. Al responds with: “I don’t know dad. You know how the Doc gets this time of year”. Bert responds: “Nonsense. All he needs is a little Christmas spirit. I’ll be off then!”.

Doc Martin is examining a patient when he hears a commotion outside in the reception room. He opens the door to his exam room, smacks his head once again on the door post, and strolls into the reception room, greeted by Morwenna and Bert setting up the Christmas tree Bert delivers.

Doc Martin exclaims, “What is this?”

Bert cheerfully responds, “What does it look like, Doc? It’s a Christmas tree! You know the song, (begins singing) ‘O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree’...”

Doc Martin interrupts Bert, “Get out.”

Bert responds, “But Doc...”

Doc Martin interjects, “Get out! Get out!”

Doc Martin proceeds with throwing out both Bert and the Christmas tree, slams the door shut, and yells to Morwenna “Get back to work!”, then sulks back to his exam room with a monotone “Bah HumDoc”.

Meanwhile at the school, the volunteers may be nicknaming me “Dr. Murphy” by the time the Christmas program is over, as my “flawless” Christmas production goes dreadfully wrong. Everything that could go wrong during the preparation of the Christmas program goes wrong.

As I take attendance of the children participating in the program, I question Louisa, saying, “Our Christmas program is supposed to have three wise men. I see Billy and Bobby, but where’s Scott?”

Louisa responds, “Scott’s mother phoned me a little bit ago. She’s taking him to see Martin. She believes he has the flu.”

I frustratingly respond, “Lovely. Let me call Martin and see what’s going on.”

Martin is in his surgery examining Scott when he receives a phone call from me.

Doc Martin answers the phone, “Ellingham.”

I respond on the other end, “Martin, I couldn’t give a rip about doctor-patient confidentiality at the moment, but I know Scott is in your office. Have you had a chance to examine him yet?”

Doc Martin bluntly responds, “Yes.”

I reply, “Without going into details, will Scott be well enough to participate in the school’s annual Christmas program this evening?”

Doc Martin again bluntly responds, “No.”

I, now hopelessly frustrated, interject, “Ugh! Bugger! What else could possibly go wrong?”

Doc Martin continues, coldly, “It gets worse. Not only does Scott have the flu, but it turns out so does Steve and Staton as well. I’m excluding all of them from participating in the school’s Christmas play.”

I panic and blurt out, “What? First I’m down to two wise men and now I don’t have anyone to perform their animal roles in the Christmas program? This is a disaster! How in the bloody world am I going to have enough cast members to complete this program!”

Doc Martin casually responds, “I have to go. I have patients to attend to.”

I respond, “Bye. (hangs up phone) Louisa, it is confirmed that Scott will not be performing in our Christmas program.”

Louisa disappointingly responds, “So we are down to just two wise men in the Christmas program? How unfortunate.”

I continue, “It gets worse, Steve and Staton are sick with the flu as well, which means we have no animal roles for our Christmas program either.”

Louisa, more disappointed and now frustrated, replies, “This is getting dreadful! What are we going to do?”

I calmly and impromptu offer a suggestion, “I’m running back to my flat. I have a worn out plush Daffy Duck I put a Christmas sweater on years ago. I’m going to grab him and lay him beside the manger for our Christmas program.”

Louisa, hesitantly responds, “I’m not sure exactly how a plush duck in a Christmas sweater is going to fulfill our requirements for animals for the Christmas program, to be honest.”

I, getting more desperate sounding by the moment, reply. “I don’t know either, but at least he will look festive.”

About that time, Buddy (“Doc Martin’s Dog”), comes meandering into the school auditorium. I shirk at the thought of a dog in the school auditorium and proceed to throw him out, when I then decide to allow Buddy to stay without objection since I am in dire need of an additional animal role for the school Christmas program and will take whatever I can get. I then had back to my flat to grab my plush Daffy.

Meanwhile, I pass Roger Fenn and his Christmas carolers on the way to my flat and wave at them, as they continue singing Christmas carols around the village, one song being “Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella.”

*Bring a torch, Jeanette, Isabella
Bring a torch, come swiftly and run
Christ is born, tell the folk of the village
Jesus is sleeping in his cradle*

*Ah, ah, beautiful is the mother
Ah, ah, beautiful is her son*

About that time, Bert passes the Christmas carolers as he makes his way with the Christmas tree toward the school, waving at the carolers as they begin lining the sidewalks to clear the path for Bert, all the while singing “He is Born”.

(Men Singers) *He is born, the divine Christ child*
(Women Singers) *Play on the oboe and bagpipes merrily*
(Men Singers) *He is born, the divine Christ child*
(Women Singers) *Sing we all of the Saviour's birth.*

(All Singers) *Jesus, Lord of all the world
Coming as a child among us
Jesus, Lord of all the world
Grant to us Thy heav'nly peace.*

(Men Singers) *He is born, the divine Christ child
(Women Singers) Play on the oboe and bagpipes merrily
(Men Singers) He is born, the divine Christ child
(All Singers) Sing we all of the Saviour's birth.*

Roger then comes up with a brilliant idea, “Hey let’s all go visit the Doc’s cottage and spread some Christmas cheer to him?”

Roger and the carolers then run off toward Doc Martin’s cottage.

Meanwhile, I make it back to the school in time to see Bert getting the Christmas tree installed in the school auditorium, and he has just finished stringing the lights on the Christmas tree. He plugs in the tree lights, and they beautifully illuminate the school’s auditorium.

With a pleasing tone, I exclaim, “Louisa and Bert, this is absolutely stunning and magical. What could possibly go wrong now?”

The Christmas lights on the tree then fizzle out.

Lucille Chote is quick to reassure me, “Don’t worry, Dr. Parker. I have a pre-lit tree at home in my ‘Christmas Museum’. Carl and I will run and grab it and set it up for the Christmas program. It isn’t as magical as a real tree, but it’ll do for a lit Christmas tree.”

While the Chotes head back to their house to pickup the pre-lit Christmas tree and bring it back to the school to set it up, Roger Fenn and the Christmas carolers have made it to Doc Martin’s cottage and are standing outside, singing “Ring those Christmas Bells” while Roger and a few choir members ring hand bells from the church’s hand bell choir.

*Some folks like to hear a Christmas song
But I like Christmas bells that go ding dong
Jingle-jangle, ding-a-ling or just bing-bong
I love to hear 'em ring*

*Oh, ring those Christmas bells
Ring those Christmas bells
While they chime, we'll have a happy time
So ring those Christmas bells*

Doc Martin is examining Chippy Miller’s chronic leg issue when he hears the cheerful singing outside his cottage. He swiftly exits his exam room, storms through the reception room, flings open his door, and yells out to Roger and the carolers “This isn’t Lawrence Welk, shut up!”.

Roger and the carolers stop singing as Doc Martin slams his door shut. Roger proceeds with leading the Christmas carolers in singing a stanza of “Silver Bells” outside of Martin’s cottage:

*City sidewalks, busy sidewalks
Dressed in holiday style
In the air there's a feeling of Christmas*

Doc Martin flings open his door once again, and yells out to Roger and the carolers even louder, “Shut up!”. Roger and the carolers stop singing once more as Doc Martin slams his door shut, yells to Morwenna to “Get back to work！”, and again sulks back to his exam room uttering “Bah HumDoc”.

As Doc Martin finishes up with Chippy Miller, Ruth shows up at Martin’s office and tells him to wrap up his patients and ensure he makes it to the Christmas program on time. “Martin, you need to wrap it up here with your patients. Ensure you leave the office in enough time to make it to the Christmas program on time. You don’t want to miss James Henry’s performance.”

Doc Martin bluntly responds, “What is the deal with all this ‘Christmas nonsense’? Who has time for Christmas trees and annoying Christmas singers and a performance of my son just lying in a manger through the entire program?”

Ruth begins to lecture Doc Martin, “Let me give you a little Christmas advice, Martin. You need to slow down and cherish this time with Louisa and James Henry. If you don’t take the initiative to spend more time with your family on Christmas, there will come a time when you want to spend time with your family but you’ll be ‘visited’ by patients that will ‘deter’ you from enjoying Christmas.”

Morwenna gets up from her desk about this time and exclaims, “I’m leaving with you now Ruth to go with you to the Christmas program. Later Doc!”

Doc Martin interjects, “You’re going? Who’s going to assist me with my patients in my surgery?”

Morwenna defends her decision, “It’s Christmas Eve, and I miss a good Christmas program for no one.”

Doc Martin counterattacks, “Bob Cratchet had to work Christmas Eve.”

Morwenna, sarcastically responds, “Bob Cratchet didn’t live in the 21st century. Merry Christmas and Bah HumDoc, Scrooge!”

Ruth responds to Doc Martin in a whispering tone, “Remember what I said, Martin. Really think about it.”

Doc Martin mockingly replies, “OK, Marley.”

Ruth chuckles, “Merry Christmas, Martin, I hope to see you at the Christmas program.”

Doc Martin seems indifferent to Ruth’s advice at first, but then he has a slight change of heart and decides he might want to attend the Christmas program after all, since it seems there are no more patients waiting for him.

However, Doc Martin is then deterred by a surprising patient who enters his surgery...Pauline.

Doc Martin gasps for a moment, the weakly asks Pauline, “I take it you’re the patient of Christmas Past?”

Pauline cheerfully responds, “Hi Doc! I guess you could say I’m a type of patient of Christmas Past. I was on my way to an ugly sweater party in Delabole.”

Doc Martin bluntly interrupts, “That explains the hideous sweater.”

Pauline continues, jokingly at first, “Do you think I would win?. Anyway, I was passing through Portwenn on the way to Delabole and had an accident on my motorbike. My ankle feels sprained, but I’ve limped on my other ankle up the road to your surgery since I knew you’d be able to take care of me.”

Doc Martin responds, “Proceed into my exam room.”

Doc Martin examines her ankle and confirms it is sprained. As he is attending to it, Pauline reminiscences with Doc Martin about some of the good Christmas memories they have had together over the years. “Do you remember some of the great Christmas memories we’ve had together over the years, including my first Christmas in Portwenn when I went Christmas caroling with Roger Fenn while we made our way to the school for the annual Christmas program, then afterwards we went back to your cottage for a Christmas gathering? Those were some fun times!”

Pauline begins to have a flashback over her first Christmas in Portwenn. She joins in with Roger Fenn and they stroll through the streets of the village on their way to the school for the annual Christmas program while singing “Angels From the Realms of Glory”.

*Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!*

The scene in Pauline’s mind changes with everyone inside the school auditorium, including Aunt Joan, watching Louisa direct the children in singing “Good Christian Men, Rejoice” for the annual school Christmas program.

*Good Christian men, rejoice with heart and soul, and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say: News! News! Jesus Christ is born today;
Ox and ass before Him bow; and He is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!*

The final scene in Pauline's mind finishes up inside Doc Martin's cottage with the villagers singing "Deck the Halls" while decorating the reception room of Doc Martin's cottage.

*Deck the halls with boughs of holly
Fa la la la la, la la la la
Tis the season to be jolly
Fa la la la la, la la la la*

*Follow me in merry measure
Fa la la la la, la la la la
While I tell of Yule tide treasure
Fa la la la la, la la la la*

Doc Martin wakes Pauline out of her reminiscences, "Pauline, Pauline, Pauline!"

Pauline briskly responds, "Yes, Doc!"

Doc Martin, sounding slightly caring, asks, "Are you OK?"

Pauline casually replies, "Oh, I'm fine, Doc! I'll be fine. I can rest here while you wrap everything up and go to the annual Christmas program. They're still having the annual Christmas programs at the school, aren't they?"

Doc Martin responds in a monotone, "Yes. My brother is directing it this year."

Pauline perks up, "Oh my you have a brother! When did this happen?"

Doc Martin brushes her off, "Long story. I don't have time to go over it now. I have a Christmas program to attend to."

Meanwhile, Janie (PC Penhale's vegan girlfriend introduced in "Doc Martin: Brotherly Love") invites PC Penhale over to her flat for a romantic Christmas Dinner.

PC Penhale rings the doorbell.

Janie comes to the door, dressed to kill and romantically answers, "Hi sugar, come to sweeten my Christmas, have we?"

PC Penhale gulps, "Yep."

Janie continues, “Well come right on in, I have a romantic Christmas dinner I prepared myself awaiting just the two of us.”

Penhale walks into Janie’s dining room.

Janie asks Penhale, “Care for a glass of wine?”

Penhale refuses, “I’d better not. I’m on duty.”

Janie shrugs and continues, “All the more for me then. I’ll be back while I grab our main course.”

Janie returns with a “Tofu Turkey”. Penhale gulps again.

Janie, continuing her romantic tone, utters, “See, we can have a vegan Christmas and still have our own ‘turkey’.”

Penhale hesitantly asks, “What’s it made out of?”

Janie responds, “Tofu. It’s nutritious for you and no poultry was harmed during the preparing of this meal.”

Penhale gulps again, but sits down and attempts to accommodate himself to Janie’s meal, hoping that Louisa invites him over to Doc Martin’s cottage and has a better meal awaiting him later. Just when everything seems blissfully romantic between Penhale and Janie, Penhale’s phone rings. “Hi. It’s Al. Get down to Large Restaurant...now.”

Meanwhile, back at the school, Bert is about finished installing the scenery for the Christmas program, and I admit it does look quite marvelous. Since things begin looking up, I come strutting loftily into the auditorium exclaiming “everything looks brilliant, Bert. The worst is over and it’s all smooth sailing from here. What could possibly go wrong?”. Bert’s installation of the Christmas program scenery then completely collapses.

I let out an, “Idiot! Bugger!”

Louisa runs over to Bert, “Are you OK, Bert?”

Bert painfully responds, “Oh, I think I’ve sprained by back. Ouch! Ow! Oh!”

Louisa, trying to calm Bert down, replies, “I hope Martin is still in. Mr. and Mrs. Chote, can you help Bert up? Bert, you’re going to need to go see Martin about your back. He’ll take good care of you.”

I interject, “I can’t believe our scenery is ruined by this idiot!”

Louisa turns to calm me down, “Relax, Nathan. We’ve had Christmas programs with far less scenery before. It’ll be OK. I know you wanted it to be perfect, but we’ll just have to settle without scenery and use our imaginations.”

About that time, Roger arrives with the rest of the church choir as they recently finished their Christmas caroling. I assign them all duties to attempt to get the scenery somewhat back together and tell Roger it's time to prepare everything musically for the Christmas program.

Roger walks into the auditorium questioning the situation, "What happened here, mate?"

I frustratingly respond, "Scenery issue, thanks to Bert. Do you think you and the choir will be all ready to go in time for the program? Are you going to be able to lead the singing OK during the program?"

Roger, trying to alleviate my frustrations, replies, "Relax, mate. I'm a professional musician. You of all people know that. You're in the finest of hands."

I interject with a question, "Finer than Bert's?"

Roger and I both chuckle.

Bert's Christmas trees end up being stolen forest property. Stuart the Ranger comes storming into Large Restaurant firing his shotgun, ready to arrest Bert, although Bert isn't present, Al is.

Stuart, fires shotgun, "Where is he?"

Al, jolted by Stuart's presence, responds, "Hey just cool it mate. Who are you looking for?"

Stuart continues, "That blasted father of yours! He stole a bunch of trees out of the forest. Anthony (Stuart's imaginary squirrel friend six feet tall) saw the whole thing. He can testify to it."

Al, attempting to calm Stuart down, replies, "OK just calm down, Stuart. Has anyone else besides 'Anthony' confirmed the trees my dad secured for our tree lot came from the forest?"

Stuart continues, "Look on the trunks of some of the trees. There should be tags identifying which part of the forest they came from."

Al, finding one of the tags, frustratingly interjects, "Bugger. Dad!"

Stuart continues, "Where is he?"

Al, now frustrated, tries to de-escalate the situation, "Just calm down, mate. Hold on a second."

Al is furious about what Bert has done and picks up the phone to call PC Penhale. "Hi. It's Al. Get down to Large Restaurant...now."

A few minutes later, PC Penhale arrives at Large Restaurant to see Stuart fire more shots with his shotgun around the restaurant grounds, knocking over some of the Christmas trees.

PC Penhale runs up to Al, “What’s going on here?”

Al frustratingly responds, “Dad illegally took some trees from the forest. Now Stuart knows and is wanting to arrest dad. He’s talking about ‘Anthony’ again so he may be off his medication again.”

PC Penhale tries to sound “professional” and replies, “No worries. I’ve got this under control. (Grabs his radio). We need an APB out on a suspect who is involved in a Christmas tree heist. We need a full manhunt on the way. Suspect is considered to be ‘at large’.”

Stuart, confused, interrupts, “I thought we were looking for Bert Large?”

Al sighs, “Dad went down to the school to work on the Christmas decorations, so we should go look for him there.”

PC Penhale and Stuart exclaim together, “Let’s go!”

Meanwhile, Doc Martin is wrapping up to leave his office to attend the Christmas program at the school, when Bert painfully drags himself into Doc Martin’s surgery. Doc Martin responds, “I take it you’re the patient of Christmas Present?” Bert responds: “And what a Christmas present I am!”

A major storm begins ripping through Portwenn about the time the Christmas program begins. The villagers rush inside the school auditorium while rain, thunder, lightning, and heavy winds descend upon Portwenn. Ruth and Morwenna sit near Louisa. Louisa asks them why hasn’t Doc Martin arrived yet. and where is he. Ruth responds “Don’t hold your breath for him He isn’t likely to make it.”

Roger begins the Christmas program, “I am thankful to be back in Portwenn this Christmas season, and I am honored to be leading the singing for the annual Christmas program, and thank you, Dr. Parker, Louisa, the Chote family, and all of you who have made this Christmas program one to remember. Let us begin by all singing together ‘Hark the Herald Angels Sing’.”

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the newborn King,
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconcile.
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim,
'Christ is born in Bethlehem'
Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the newborn King.*

Hail, the heaven-born Prince of peace!

*Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the newborn King.*

The children who perform the part of two of the wise men then come onto the stage singing “We Three Kings of Orient Are”. I hang my head, saying “This Christmas program is becoming a disaster. What could possibly go wrong now?”

*We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain, moor and mountain
Following yonder star*

*O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy Perfect Light*

A door opens. Shotgun blasts ring out. Everyone in the auditorium screams. Roger looks down the hall at three shadowy figures aligning the doorway.

Roger boldly asks the figures, “Have you come seeking the Baby Jesus?”

Stuart responds, “We’ve come seeking that no good Bert Large who’s stolen forest property!”

Al, trying to calm Stuart down, interjects, “Just calm down mate, and quit waving that shot gun around.”

Stuart’s shotgun goes off again. Everyone in the auditorium screams again.

Roger calmly responds, “Bert isn’t here.”

I rise up from my seat and come to the platform beside Roger, explaining, “He’s at Martin’s surgery. The idiot sprained his back installing our Christmas program scenery and last I’ve seen him, he was on his way to Martin to get checked out.”

Al calmly responds, “Thanks mates.”

Penhale interjects loudly and boldly “If anyone of you comes in contact with him before we get to him, remember, he is a wanted suspect.”

Al shakes his heads at Penhale, “Cool it.”

Stuart, Al, and PC Penhale head off to Martin’s surgery to look for Bert.

Roger, trying to deflect everyone’s attention back to the Christmas program, proclaims, “Let us get back to our Christmas program. The children are now going to sing ‘Silent Night, Holy Night’, followed by ‘O Holy Night’, in which the church choir will join in on the chorus.

*Silent night, Holy night,
All is calm, All is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace.
Sleep in heavenly peace.*

*Silent night, Holy night,
Son of God, Love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.*

*O holy night
The stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our dear Saviour's birth
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
Till he appeared and the soul felt it's worth*

*The thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices
For yonder brinks a new and glorious morn*

(The church Christmas choir joins in with the children singing)

*Fall on your knees
O hear the angel voices
O night divine
O night when Christ was born
O night divine
O night, O night divine*

Doc Martin attends to Bert’s back, which Bert then responds he can stay here at the cottage with Pauline and keep her company, and that Doc Martin should go and attend the rest of the Christmas program before its over, as if he continues to stay here at the cottage, he’s missing out on a great Christmas across Portwenn.

Doc Martin examining Bert, concludes, “You indeed sprained your back, but everything should be OK. You’ll need to stay here and rest though and not move around much.”

Bert casually responds, “No problem, Doc. Pauline here will keep me company. It is lovely to see you again, Pauline, even if it is under ‘painful circumstances’. We’ll be fine, Doc. Go and attend the rest of the Christmas program before it’s all over with. If you continue to stay here, you’ll be missing out on one of the finest Christmas programs in Portwenn and a great Christmas across Portwenn, even if I did manage to have a little accident with the scenery.”

Doc Martin attempts to wrap things up again so he can attend the Christmas program, hoping he hasn’t missed James Henry’s performance yet.

Back at the Christmas program, Roger leads the church choir in the singing of the “Hallelujah Chorus”. Near the end of the chorus, I whisper over to Louisa on how beautiful the Christmas program is going and exclaim to Louisa, “This is breathtaking and perfect, what could possibly go wrong now?”.

*Hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah
Hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah*

*For the lord God omnipotent reigneth
Hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah
For the lord God omnipotent reigneth
Hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah
For the lord God omnipotent reigneth
Hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah*

*And He shall reign for ever and ever
And he shall reign forever and ever
And he shall reign forever and ever
And he shall reign forever and ever*

*King of kings forever and ever
and lord of lords hallelujah hallelujah
And he shall reign forever and ever*

*King of kings and lord of lords
King of kings and lord of lords
And he shall reign forever and ever*

*Forever and ever and ever and ever
(King of kings and lord of lords)*

*Hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah
Hallelujah*

When the chorus ends, the power goes out all across the village, forcing the Christmas program to resort to a candlelight service. Everyone in the auditorium screams as the power goes out. Louisa and I run to grab torches from the school's emergency response cabinet.

I rise up from my seat and proclaim to everyone, "Everyone settle down. It seems as if the storm knocked out power to the school."

Roger, looking out a window, responds, "It's worse than you think, mate. Seems the storm knocked out power to the entire village."

I continue, "Everyone hang tight. Louisa and I will run and grab a few torches from our emergency response cabinet. Louisa?"

As Louisa and I head down the hall, Louisa begins talking with me. "Can I make just a small observation? I've noticed every time you utter the phrase 'What else could go wrong?', something actually goes wrong."

I chuckle, "Purely coincidence. Our power is out, what else could possibly go wrong?"

A crash, followed by a piercing scream, emanates from the auditorium. Louisa and I run back to the auditorium brandishing torches, only to discover Mrs. Tishell is on the floor in pain.

I exclaim, "Mrs. Tishell? What happened?"

Mrs. Tishell painfully responds, "Clumsy me tripped over one of these ornaments next to the piano left here by Bert's scenery catastrophe, and I've slipped and sprained my neck again."

Louisa rushes to Mrs. Tishell's side, "Can you get up?"

Mrs. Tishell painfully replies, "Yes, but Ouch! Ow! It hurts! Do you think Martin is still in his surgery?"

Louisa, looking around the auditorium, responds, "Well he isn't here, so I guess so."

I interject, "You'll need to go and see Martin. He's the only one who can treat that."

Roger comes walking back into the auditorium, carrying a box of candles, "I went to the supply closet and found a box of candles we can pass around to everyone. We can continue the Christmas program with a candlelight service."

Louisa, seems satisfied and responds, "That actually sounds delightful right now."

I continue, "Yes it does. OK, listen up everyone. Roger is going to begin passing out candles to everyone. We're going to adapt our Christmas program into a candlelight service. Please exercise caution when holding your candles as we don't want to burn the school down in the process. (I glance over at Louisa) I won't say it."

Roger responds, “By the way, Nathan, you’ll need to take over the piano for the rest of the Christmas program if you don’t mind.”

I continue, “No problem. I have the rest of tonight’s carols by memory. Mrs. Dodson taught me well.”

Meanwhile at Doc Martin’s cottage, power is out there as well. Doc Martin informs Bert he’s heading into the kitchen to grab a couple of torches so they can make their way around in the dark. As Doc Martin enters into the kitchen, at the back door, in the dark of the night, the rain pours, the thunder claps, and a hooded figure appears. Doc Martin asks “Hello?”, then lets out a scream when he sees it is Mrs. Tishell! Martin weakly responds “Patient of Christmas Future?”.

Doc Martin brings Mrs. Tishell into his surgery and attends to her neck, while Mrs. Tishell begins a fantasy.

In Mrs. Tishell’s fantasy, Doc Martin finds himself on the platform of a church. The church sanctuary is lined in Christmas decorations with a large tree up front, yet Doc Martin is dressed in a tuxedo with a bride descending the aisle toward him as the wedding march is played somberly on the organ. Lifting the veil from her face, he lets out a large scream, discovering it is Mrs. Tishell! He runs out of the church, all the while the church choir begins singing “Carol of the Bells”.

*Hark! how the bells
Sweet silver bells
All seem to say,
"Throw cares away."
Christmas is here
Bringing good cheer
To young and old
Meek and the bold*

*Ding, dong, ding, dong
That is their song
With joyful ring
All caroling
One seems to hear
Words of good cheer
From ev'rywhere
Filling the air*

*Oh how they pound,
Raising the sound,
O'er hill and dale,
Telling their tale,
Gaily they ring*

*While people sing
Songs of good cheer
Christmas is here
Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas
Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas*

*On, on they send
On without end
Their joyful tone
To ev'ry home*

Doc Martin finds himself in the church graveyard. He glances over at a grave marked “Clive Tishell”, screams “No!”, then continues running until he reaches a grave that stops him frozen in his tracks as the choir’s singing of the Christmas carol comes to an abrupt end. “Louisa Glasson”. He screams “No, No, No, This can’t be!”. With Mrs. Tishell appearing in her wedding dress and proclaiming “It is. It is just you and me, Dr. Ellingham”. Doc Martin responds, “No, Mrs. Tishell! Mrs. Tishell! Mrs. Tishell!” Mrs. Tishell wakes up to see Doc Martin speaking to her.

Doc Martin shaking Mrs. Tishell’s arm, exclaims, “Mrs Tishell!”

Mrs. Tishell softly responds, “Yes, my sweet Christmas truffle?”

Doc Martin sighs, “Are you OK?”

Mrs. Tishell replies tenderly, “Physically yes, now that you have cured me, but in my heart, I’ll never be cured of my love for you.”

Doc Martin ignores her and decides once and for all, he’s going to the Christmas program and spending time with Louisa and James Henry, and he hopes he hasn’t missed James Henry’s part in the program. Doc Martin exclaims: “I’m tired of waiting around here being deterred by patients. I’m off to the Christmas program to spend time with my family, and I hope I am not too late.” Bert and Pauline respond: “Goodbye, Doc”, with Mrs. Tishell responding: “Farewell, my love!” Doc Martin leaves the cottage and runs toward the school.

Meanwhile, at the school, one of the school children read Luke 2:6-14 for the Christmas program.

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Carla Chote sings her special solo in the Christmas program, singing “Away in a Manger”. James Henry is in the manger playing the part of Baby Jesus. Doc Martin arrives during the second stanza of her song, and Louisa joins in singing with Carla on the third stanza, as Doc Martin’s heart warms as he makes his way down the aisle toward the platform to listen to them sing.

*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed
The little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay*

(Doc Martin arrives during this stanza)

*The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle 'til morning is nigh*

(Louisa joins in and sings with Carla)

*Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay
Close by me for ever and love me, I pray
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care
And take us to Heaven to live with Thee there
And take us to Heaven to live with Thee there*

Doc Martin and Louisa fix their gazes at each other, in which Doc Martin and Louisa kiss, and Doc Martin tells Louisa “Merry Christmas, Louisa”, in which she replies “Merry Christmas, Martin”. Doc Martin shows a gentler side toward Louisa and the villagers. The Christmas program has finally gone more smoothly, much to my delight.

I wrap up the service with a brief Christmas message by saying “This Christmas, I invite everyone in our village to unwrap the Greatest Christmas Gift of all, a Gift not wrapped in gold foil, but wrapped in swaddling clothes, a Gift not lying under a tree, but lying in a manger, and later nailed to a tree, a Gift not purchased with silver or gold, but purchased with the precious blood of Jesus. This is the most Precious Christmas Present anyone could receive this Christmas.” Everyone in the room, led by Roger Fenn, joins together in singing “Go Tell It on the Mountain”.

(Sing in Key of F)

*Go, tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere
Go tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born*

(Sing in the Key of G)

*Go tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere
Go tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born
That Jesus Christ is born
That Jesus Christ is born*

After the song ends, the power comes back on at the school and across the village. Everyone seems pleased that the power is back on, in which Louisa gasps “my turkey, my Christmas dinner!”. Louisa runs out of the school on her way to Doc Martin’s cottage to discover the fate of her Christmas dinner.

Doc Martin invites everyone in the village to return to his cottage for Christmas dinner. “So who all wants to come back to my place and have Christmas dinner with the rest of the family.”

Everyone responds, “We do!”

As the villagers leave the school auditorium, they all notice the storm is over, the glistening moonlight peeks through the clouds, and a dusting of snow surprisingly begins to drift across Portwenn, casting a “magical” feel across the village as “a Christmas present from God”, as Lucille Chote comments. Everyone in the village makes their way to Doc Martin’s cottage, led by Roger Fenn, all singing “Angels We Have Heard on High”, clutching their candles from the candlelight service, casting a warm glow across the Portwenn Christmas.

*Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o're the plains
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains*

*Gloria in excelsis Deo
Gloria in excelsis Deo*

Louisa is the first to make it back to Doc Martin’s cottage. When Louisa enters the kitchen, she finds Bert carefully pulling the turkey out of the oven. Her Christmas dinner has come out perfect, and Bert examines the turkey and exclaims “Martha Stewart, eat your heart out!”.

The rest of the village arrives and mingles around Doc Martin's cottage in one of the most joyful Christmas gatherings the village has had, sipping hot cocoa and feeling the warmth of the fire burning in the fireplace.

Al, Stuart, Janie, and Penhale enter about this time, and while Al is upset about going on a manhunt for Bert, they all forget about the Christmas tree fiasco for the evening and join in the celebration, with Bert agreeing to settle the matter with Stuart after Christmas. They join in sipping hot cocoa (with Janie sipping apple cider, of course), and the villagers partake in Louisa's perfect Christmas dinner.

Roger, Martin, Louisa, Ruth, and I begin singing "We Wish You a Merry Christmas", in which the entire village joins in singing the Christmas carol.

*We wish you a Merry Christmas;
We wish you a Merry Christmas;
We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.
Good tidings we bring to you and your kin;
Good tidings for Christmas and a Happy New Year.*

(Pauline, Bert, Al, and Mrs. Tishell sing the following stanza together)

*Oh, bring us a figgy pudding;
Oh, bring us a figgy pudding;
Oh, bring us a figgy pudding so bring some out here
We won't go until we get some;
We won't go until we get some;
We won't go until we get some, so bring some out here*

(Everyone joins back together and sings the following stanza)

*We wish you a Merry Christmas;
We wish you a Merry Christmas;
We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.*

Martin and Louisa wrap up the story by saying "God bless us, everyone" and Ruth and I finish up by saying "From our family to your family, we wish you a blessed, Merry, and Happy Christmas", and the entire village sings the final line of the above Christmas carol "and a Happy New Year".

In memory of Barbara and Charles Dodson: Barbara Dodson taught me (almost) everything I know about playing the piano, especially how to keep the classic Christmas carols alive and well for Christmas generations to come. Her husband Charles was a piano tuner and kept pianos singing perfectly-tuned Christmas carols for many a Christmas past.